

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1748

C O N F I D E N T I A L HAVANA 1100

DEPT PASS HORN OF AFRICA COLLECTIVE

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDEV MILI ET SO CU

SUBJ: MENGISTU VISIT TO CUBA

1. SUMMARY: FIDEL CASTRO AND MENGISTU SEEM TO AGREE THAT PEACEFUL, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT SHOULD BE SOUGHT IN ERITREA BUT MENGISTU ADOPTS CLEARLY HARDER LINE. CUBAN TROOPS WILL REMAIN IN ETHIOPIA INDEFINITELY. BOTH LEADERS TAKE SWIPES AT U.S. AS LEADER OF IMPERIALIST FORCES. MENGISTU GRATUITOUSLY CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE U.S. WITHDRAWAL FROM GUANTANAMO, PANAMAIAN SOVEREIGNTY IN CANAL ZONE AND SELF-DETERMINATION FOR PUERTO RICO. END SUMMARY

2. AT MASSIVE RALLY ON APRIL 26 ATTENDED BY NEARLY ONE MILION, FIDEL CASTRO MADE UNCHARACTERISTICALLY BRIEF (15 MINUTES) SPEECH WHILE PRESIDENT MENGISTU SPOKE FOR 1 -1/4 HOURS. CASTRO MAKE FOLLOWING MAJOR POINTS:
A. CUBA FAVORS PEACE BETWEEN ETHIOPIA AND ALL ITS NEIGHBORS ON THE BASIS OF RESPECT FOR TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND NON-INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS.
B. "JANKEE IMPERIALISM PRETENDS TO QUESTION ETHIOPIA'S RIGHT TO DEFEND ITS TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND ITS UNITY AGAINST
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THE SECESSIONISTS OF ERITREA." SINCE ETHIOPIA ALSO NEEDS INTERNAL PEACE HOWEVER, CUBA FAVORS "JUST POLITICAL SOLUTIONS, DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM OF THE NATIONALISTIES OF LENINIST PRINCIPLES WITHIN A REVOLUTIONARY ETHIOPIAN STATE WHICH PRESERVES AS AN UNWAIVABLE RIGHT ITS UNITY, ABSOLUTE INTEGRITY AND SOVEREIGNTY".

C. CUBAN TROOPS WILL REMAIN IN ETHIOPIA AS LONG AS BOTH

COUNTRIES AGREE THEY ARE NEEDED TO HELP ETHIOPIA RESIST ANY EXTERNAL AGGRESSION. IMPERIALISTS AND REACTIONARIES CALL FOR THE IMMEDIATE WITHDRAWAL OF CUBAN FORCES, BUT THIS WOULD OPEN THE DOOR TO NEW AGGRESSION AGAINST ETHIOPIA. IT SHOULD BE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD THAT CUBAN SOLDIERS WILL NOT STAND IDLY BY IN EVENT OF ANY NEW ATTACK AGAINST ETHIOPIA. D. CUBAN REFUSES TO DISCUSS WITH THE U.S. ITS RIGHT TO HELP IN ETHIOPIA OR ANYWHERE ELSE IN AFRICA.

3. MENGISTU'S SPEECH CONSISTED LARGELY OF LONG POLEMICAL REVIEW OF ETHIOPIAN HISTORY JUSTIFYING THE REVOLUTION AGAINST IMPERIALISM AT HOME AND ABROAD. HE PRAISED FIDELCASTRO AND THE CUBAN EXAMPLE AND EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR CUBAN HELP AS WELL AS THAT OF THE USSR, SOUTH YEMEN, THE GDR AND OTHER SOCIALIST STATES IN THE WAR AGAINST SOMALIA. MENGISTU LUMPED TOGETHER ALL INTERNAL OPPOSITION INCLUDING FEUDALISTS AND SECESSIONISTS ON THE ONE HAND, AND THE REACTIONARY LEADERSHIP OF SOMALIA AND SOME ARAB STATES ON THE OTHER AS COUNTERREVOLUTIONARY TOOLS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPERIALISM (ESPECIALLY THE U.S.)

4. WITH RESPECT TO ERITREA, MENGISTU SCORED THE SECESSIONISTS AS AGENTS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPERIALISM WHO ARE TRYING TO DESTROY THE ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION. NEVERTHELESS, HE SAID, ETHIOPIA HAS TRIED SEVERAL TIMES TO RESOLVE THE

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PROBLEM OF ERITREA PEACEFULLY AND "OF COURSE, WILL CONTINUE THE SAME COURSE". BUT A MINUTE LATER HE NOTED THAT THE SECESSIONISTS HAVE REPEATEDLY REJECTED HIS GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS AND THEREFORE THE ETHIOPIAN PEOPLE "ARE RESOLVED TO INTENSIFY THEIR JUST AND REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE TO DESTROY THIS ANTI-POPULAR CONSPIRACY. AND WE ARE SURE THAT THE CUBAN MASSES WILL BE WITH US IN THESE EFFORTS FOR PEACE AND THE REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE OF CLASSES".

5. TURNING TO THE NEED FOR REVOLUTIONARY SOLIDARITY TO OPPOSE IMPERIALISM IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD, MENGISTU OPINED THAT THE "OPPRESSION AND EXPLOITATION WHICH CONTINUE TO BE PERPETRATED BY U.S. IMPERIALISM OVER THE MAJORITY OF THE LATIN AMERICAN PEOPLES IS MUCH MORE SEVERE THAN IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD. AS A RESULT, THE STRUGGLE OF THESE PEOPLES IS DESTINED TO BE LONG AND BLOODY." SPECIFICALLY, HE CITED THE CASE OF CHILE, AND CALLED FOR IMMEDIATE U.S. EVACUATION OF GUANTANAMO, PANAMANIAN SOVEREIGNTY IN THE CANAL ZONE AND SELF-DETERMINATION FOR PUERTO RICO. BY CONTRAST, MENGISTU CALLED MUCH MORE BRIEFLY AND GENERALLY FOR SOLIDARITY WITH THE OPPRESSED PEOPLES AND LIBERATION MOVEMENTS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA.

5. COMMENT: MENGISTU MAY HAVE BEEN SLIGHTLY MORE OPEN TO POSSIBILITY OF PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT IN ERITREA THAN HE WAS IN HIS REMARKS AT PLAYA GIRON DECORATION CEREMONY (HAVANA 1074), BUT NOT MUCH. VICE-PRESIDENT AND SENIOR FOREIGN POLICY ADVISOR CARLOS RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ COMMENTED TO USINT CHIEF AT RECEPTION LATER ON 26TH THAT DISCUSSIONS WITH ETHIOPIANS THIS WEEK HAVE BEEN DIFFICULT. HE SAID THAT CUBA CONTINUES TO SUPPORT POLITICAL SETTLEMENT IN ERITREA, AND IMPLIED THAT BOTH CASTRO'S AND MENGISTU'S SPEECHES THAT DAY WERE TAILORED TO GIVE IMPRESSION OF GREATER COINCIDENCE OF VIEWS THAN IN FACT EXISTS. RODRIGUEZ WAS NOT OPTIMISTIC ABOUT PROSPECTS IN ERITREA, SAYING THAT STRONG EMOTIONS ARE INVOLVED ON BOTH SIDES OF PROBLEM. WITH
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RESPECT TO OGADEN, RODRIGUEZ COMMENTED THAT ACCORDING TO CUBAN INFORMATION, SITUATION ON THE GROUND IS NOT AS ALARMING AS MANY REPORTS SUGGEST.

6. SOME USUALLY WELL-INFORMED DIPLOMATIC OBSERVORS HERE BELIEVE THAT CUBA, CONCERNED ABOUT RELATIONS WITH FRIENDLY ARAB COUNTRIES, WILL NOW TAKE A MORE DIRECT POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC LEAD IN SEEKING PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT IN ERITREA. (STILL UNVERIFIED HINTS THAT CUBANS HAVE ALSO BEEN TALKING THIS WEEK TO GEORGE HABBASH ABOUT AN ERITREAN SETTLEMENT ARE PERTINENT IN THIS REGARD.) THERE IS ALSO SPECULATION HERE THAT PERSONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN CASTRO AND MENGISTU HAVE COOLED SOMEWHAT AFTER THIS WEEK'S TALKS.

7. THOSE DIPLOMATS ATTENDING APRIL 26 RALLY WHO LISTENED TO SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETATION OF MENGISTU'S SPEECH IN ENGLISH SAY THAT HE CAME OVER AS EVEN TOUGHER ON ERITREA, ASSERTING THAT EFFORTS FOR PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT HAVE DEFINITELY FAILED AND REBELS WILL NOW BE CRUSHED WITH CUBAN HELP. IT IS PROBABLE THAT THIS TRANSLATION WAS HANDLED BY ETHIOPIANS ACCOMPANYING MENGISTU PARTY, AND IT WILL THEREFORE BE OF INTEREST TO SEE JUST HOW HIS SPEECH IS REPORTED IN ADDIS ABABA.
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NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED HORN OF AFRICA COLLECTIVE.

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